

## **Region 5 Forum Primary Team's Summary of Key Messages and Follow-up Activities from the Forum**

### **Key Message:**

There will definitely need to be different solutions for large versus small utilities. This existing message was reiterated and substantiated at the Forum. What we had not heard before were practical approaches for addressing these different needs, such as regionalization, area-wide planning, basin planning, and enhanced financial support for the smaller utilities that cannot take advantage of the economies of scale available to the mid- to large-scale utilities.

### **Region 5 Follow-Up Activities:**

1. Maximize on-location assistance presently provided by 104g1 for wastewater utilities and by special grants for water utilities, so as to concentrate on the long-term sustainability of the utility.
2. Explore with States how SRF assistance can be oriented to support small utilities.
3. Work with the States to expand area-wide planning with sustainability in mind, exploring ways that regionalization and basin planning can be used more effectively.
4. Promote asset management and EMS performance.

### **Key Message:**

EPA has definite roles to play, such as gathering and listening to feedback from others, and providing education, facilitation, research, technical assistance and leadership. EPA must incorporate the SI message into many daily tasks. Otherwise, many of the environmental gains made since the 1970s may be compromised.

### **Region 5 Follow-Up Activities:**

1. Orient all Region 5 Water Division staff to begin to incorporate sustainability into many of our work elements. SI needs to be considered our standard way of doing business, and needs buy-in by all staff, from the top on down.
2. Region 5 must also get the critical buy-in and participation by Region 5 States on SI efforts. Perhaps the State Water Directors could meet with the Missouri Director who spoke at the Forum. SI must be implemented as a team effort with the States for our efforts to be truly effective.
3. We need to keep ourselves technically aware and competent to be able to spot weaknesses and address them.
4. We need to continue to encourage green infrastructure and to consider other non-traditional ideas to achieve SI goals at lower costs.
5. Regional Sustainability awards might be a great idea.

**Key Message:**

The lack of sustainability of our utilities is a very large and growing problem. There is not a single solution to this general problem, and it cannot be solved by any one entity. We have to make sure that we have a balance of solutions and participation by utilities, States, academia, consulting engineers, other Agencies and interested environmental organizations.

**Region 5 Follow-Up Activities:**

1. Our participation on a Regional and National basis should ensure that a balanced effort is undertaken to maximize efforts to reduce the gap in infrastructure needs. Some speakers at the National SI Forum claimed that specific financial approaches or technological applications would serve as the overall answer. The infrastructure GAP is huge and growing. SRF, asset management, research, education, area-wide planning, and effective use of appropriate technologies are all parts of effective SI solutions. Even with the effective use of all these tools, we will not be able to eliminate the GAP, but can hopefully reduce it to a level where it can be managed.
2. We need to continue to facilitate the kind of Forum that we hosted in St. Louis, so as to continue to develop our sustainability network, and listen to States, utilities, academia, consulting engineers, other Agencies and environmental organizations. Region 5 must continue to serve in this role on some level. The one statement that was heard from several people at the Track 3 session was the recognition in a very positive way that EPA was applauded for seeking out solutions to the problem. We were there to not only speak, but more importantly, to listen. We need to maintain this role in developing a sustainability network across the region.
3. If in our monitoring we see an element of the sustainable infrastructure problem that is lacking or mired in inactivity, we need to be change agents to encourage activity in this area.